

Conference *The Impact of Regionalisation, Intermunicipal Cooperation, and Metropolitanisation on Local, Regional, and National Governments in Europe*

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Under the auspices of OLA network, the conference *Metropolitanisation, Regionalisation and Rural Inter-Municipal Cooperation* took place at the premises of the Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia from June 30 to July 2, 2016. Around one hundred local government scholars and practitioners gathered to discuss the impact of regionalisation, metropolitanisation, and inter-municipal cooperation on local government across Europe and beyond. Three days of intensive exchange of views resulted in a fruitful and successful conference that tackled some important issues of local government.

OLA (*Observatory on Local Autonomy*) is a network of researchers and civil servants, all specialised in the study of local autonomy and management of local government across Europe. It covers the EU member states as well as the countries outside the EU and outside Europe.¹

The Conference was organised in plenary sessions and two parallel workshops devoted mainly to the typology of the forms of government, modern governance in rural areas, and the impact of metropolitanisation of local government in various political, administrative and legal contexts.

The presented papers tackled various issues of the main conference themes such as redefining of the relation between unitary and federal

¹ More information about OLA Network, its members and primary aims can be found at the OLA's web site: <http://www.ola-europe.com/en/accueil/>

states (Chabrot); decentralisation in unitary states (Durand & Guemar); exploring many dimensions of one particular issue (e.g. metropolitanisation in France – Regourd, Dubois, Markovici; cases of metropolitanisation in Poland (Pyka, Bosiacki, Kosturbiec); the case of Moscow (Chernenko); comparison of various issues in different states such as comparison of France and Germany (Volmerange); the case of Barcelona Metropolitan Area (Reixach et al.); cases of metropolitanisation in Italy (Boggero, Carloni, Mone, Paris et al., Pinto & Ferrara); comparison between Lyon and Milan (Adobati et al.); variants of devolution/decentralisation between the North and South of Europe (Himsworth); the state of regionalism in the countries of the former Yugoslavia (Koprić & Đulabić); reforms of local government in Cyprus (Savvides), Romania (Vedina & Staiculescu) and Lybia (Mohamed); the position of regional government in Slovakia (Malikova & Klimovsky), etc.

The Conference was a combination of scholar and practical approaches, which could be seen from the list of speakers that included not only academics from the OLA network countries, but also practitioners from these countries. The final day of the conference was devoted to discussing and debating the conclusions which local elected representatives and practitioners could draw from the papers presented by scholars and researchers of local government. The objective was to summarize the lessons that could be used in practice, to clearly determine the issues that could be used for proposals and advocacy of legislative changes, and to rethink the role of local and regional self-government. One of the most significant contributions of the Conference was discussion about the need to change the European Charter of Local Self-Government as thirty years have passed since its adoption and many changes have taken place in local government in Europe. Such an action requires strong advocacy and initiation of the complex mechanism of amendments and adoption of the Charter change. Whether this path will be taken in due time, it has yet to be seen.

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